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*Philip H. Holt 259.
With the Author's Regards*

THE SOVEREIGNTY
OF ART



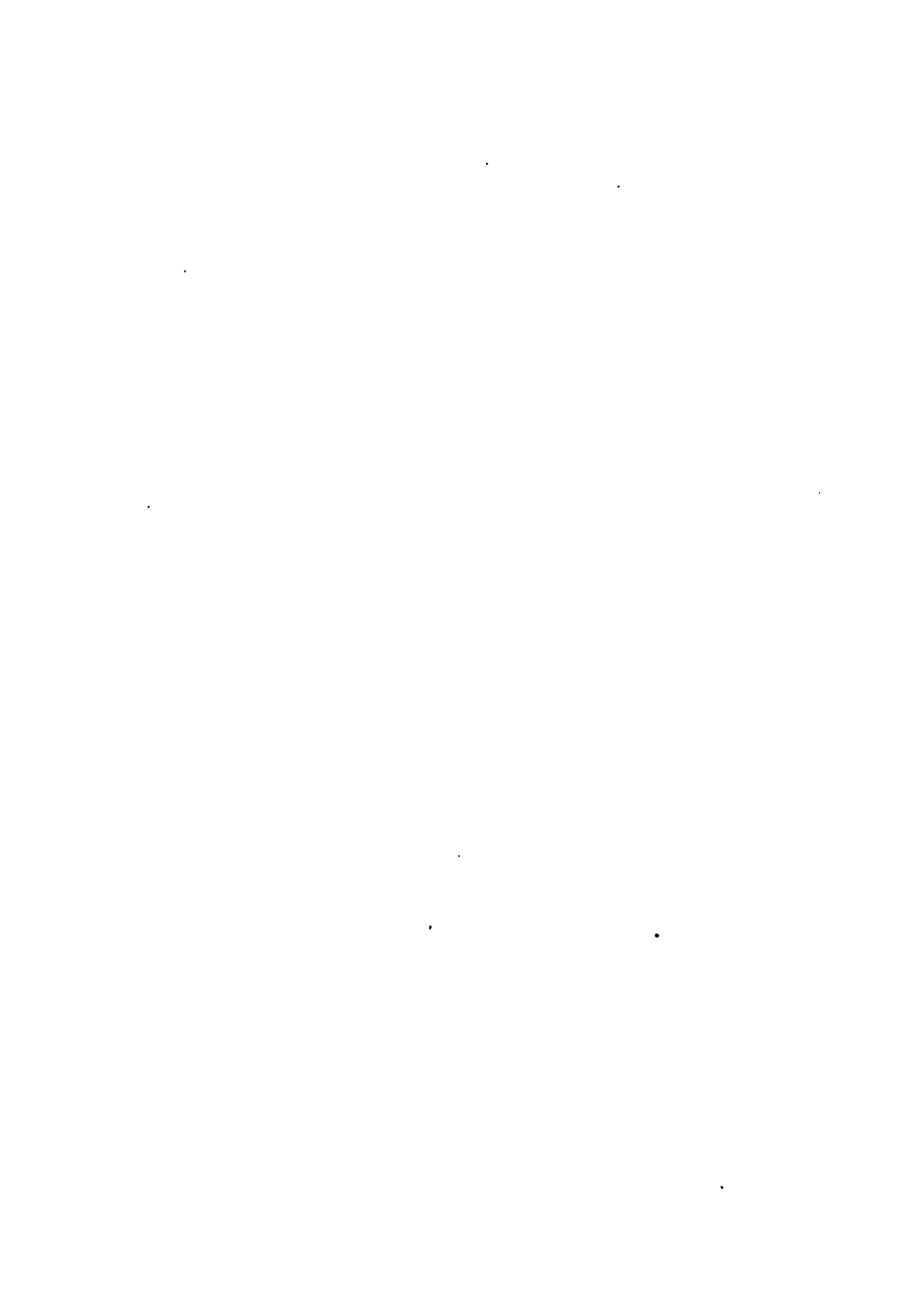
*TWO DISCOURSES
DELIVERED IN THE LIVERPOOL
SCHOOL OF ART*

BY
CHARLES SHARP

LONDON:
T. FISHER UNWIN, 26, PATERNOSTER SQUARE.

1888.

**The Portico de la Gloria of
Mestre Mateo.**



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THE PORTICO DE LA GLORIA OF MESTRE MATEO.

ON the northern coast of Spain, there stands, breasting the wild Atlantic waves, a great Cape, having passed which you enter what is, of all places in this world, the Bay of Storms. Straight over the topmost height of this headland, across the dreary Galician plain, some fifteen Spanish leagues as the crow flies, stands the Cathedral of Santiago,—dedicated to that Father of Pilgrims, St. James of Compostella,—a cathedral to which, for centuries, many a weary man has come with painful feet; on gaily caparisoned mule; or in jolting carriage, over the roads that lie between the shrine and Rome on the south, or Paris and the cities of France to the north; or by old English ways

that led through Kentish valleys and over Sussex downs to the sea, that so frequently proved a greater terror to the pilgrim than the rough roads, with their dreary distances, and not uncommon perils.

But this place, to which "cockle hat and staff and the sandal shoon" tended so long and so numerous, was, when the eyes at last beheld it, a joyous sight for the beauty it revealed, and for the many tokens of fearful faith and simple piety visible in its exterior wealth of sculptured stone; and in its interior, marvellously wrought and fashioned into nave, transepts, and chancel, in which latter stood an altar, all ablaze with votive offerings of jewels and gold.

Across the Silversmiths' Square, by the Pilgrims' Hostel, and over-rich in Renaissance stone carvings and columns, the great west front towers before the beholder. Within this temple,

built with hands no further back than the last century, is another church, the mother sanctuary, upon the delicate and wondrous details of which tender thoughts and loving hands worked seven hundred years ago, when shrines were many, and pilgrims apt to go on pilgrimage. Inside the great iron-studded door you are but between the casket and the gorgeous thing it holds. Like a carved Indian ball, inserted cunningly within its fellow, is this exquisite Gothic church of the twelfth century, the masterpiece of Mestre Mateo, sculptor and architect.

Over the "Portal of Glory," like a rainbow of subdued colours, stretches from the northern to the southern heaven, a sculptured arch worth a king's ransom to behold for once, though life-long darkness followed the vision,—the great company of the Apostles; the Angelic Choir, with sackbut and harp,

with viol and trumpet; Cherubim and Seraphim; the Host of Heaven, irradiating all the space between the doors; and in the centre of the arch, the keystone of it, ineffable and transcending all, the King of Glory, crowned and blest.

Dividing the main entry, and supporting the architrave of the triple portal, is a slender richly-carved column covered with foliage and figures; and at the base of this shaft, kneeling before the heavenly vision above, is the effigy of Mestre Mateo, its cold stone kissed into smoothness by the warm lips of mothers and infants these many centuries past.

I doubt if anywhere on this earth can be seen a like adoration of the artist for the sake of his art, as is to be seen in this dumb figure, mutilated by age and by kisses. Pilgrim and priest and prince have come and gone, and are

forgotten; but the stony semblance of the man whose mind and hand conceived and wrought the glories of this house of God still makes the dead sculptor, Mateo, live and speak.

Not that this Cathedral is an unsurpassed work of art. Its sculpture is somewhat rude, its proportions not altogether just; but it is the goal to which patient steps have tended—the gate of heaven—the place of absolution; and no wonder if, within sight of its overspanning arch, its long aisles of towering columns, and its altar of sacrifice crowded with gifts, the pilgrim-head grew weak after long journeys, and bowed itself, and covered with passionate salutations the likeness of the master who had transformed the dull stone of the quarry into a fane of marvellous beauty and a miracle of art.

Let us turn from Santiago to find an illustration elsewhere.

Further back in history this time. On the Attican plain, with lofty hills all round about it—except on that side where Charles Wordsworth fancied he saw the fleet of Agamemnon still lingering in the port of Aulis—stands the City of the Violet Crown. Scooped out of the solid rock lying under the Acropolis, rising one above the other, are the terraced seats of the Athenian Theatre. The Parthenon is overhead, the valley of Illisus below, and away in the distance, visible through the tremulous air, and lying beneath a bright blue sky, is the sea, beautiful in its calm, awful in its storm, even as storm and calm alternate in the tragic plays with which Sophocles or Eschylus held their audiences spell-bound. To-day the air is filled with an inexpressible softness; the sky gleams in the brilliance of its azure; and it is as though Demeter was reposing in soft content,

diffusing around her a subdued joyousness of feeling such as could only be felt on Attican soil—the place where the gods sojourned when on earth. No wonder the susceptible Athenians, who loved buffoonery, wept over tragedy, and put to death an interpreter because he had defiled their ears with the tongue of a barbarian, were “indulging in transports of gaiety provoked by the humour of a parody written by a favourite author.” Yesterday, tragedy held the stage; to-day, comedy keeps them in raptures.

Suddenly the performers stop. Nicias is in Sicily fighting the enemies of Greece. He has sustained a defeat which will plunge one half of the audience in mourning. An actor steps forward and, with downcast eyes, announces the news. “What a moment! and how did the audience behave? They remained fixed in their places;

they covered their faces with their mantles ; and dropped a few tears to the memory of fathers, brothers, and friends now no more ; they then ordered the piece to proceed, and entered into the same ungovernable transports of delight as before."

It is true these people were of great physical and moral contrasts ; of capricious principles, rushing from the "dreadful deeds and dreadful compensations" of tragedy to the "devices quaint and frolics ever new" of comedy. It is true there were present at the performance strangers from tributary states, before whom the Athenian must veil his grief and make laughter dry up his tears. But there was something more. "It is said the corpse-bearers of Orlando were known to be angels by the trembling of their wings ; and the natives of Attica were, so far as mere susceptibility is concerned, of something more than

earthly mould." The cries of a thousand mourning Rachels were unheard in the presence of the art that filled the stage with mimic life. It was not the highest form of art, but it held these people in chains until the spell was removed, and they were once more free to weep for their dead. They were subjects of a realm over which art held illimitable sway, and the evidence of their subjection was not wanting in the ease with which they for the moment forgot their defeat.

The kisses of the Spaniard, and the self-abnegation of the Greek, were not so much for the sculptor and the dramatist, as for their art. Peasant, and king and Athenian could alike see something in the sculptured temple, and Greek play, transcending the meaner things of the field, and the street, and the market-place. Something which endowed earthly materials with supreme

beauty. Which, like the potter moulding his clay, could work with cunning hand the plastic earth, until it changed into a vessel of harmonious lines out of which the gods might drink. A power which, in all ages, has reigned sovereign over men, drawing them, as the sun draws up the mists from low-lying marshes, from earth towards things supernal. Something which *creates* out of wood, or stone, or coloured pigment, or out of the grey matter of the busy brain, sculptures, pictures, stories on the stage; words, formed into majestic phrases, marching to the solemn tread of epics and odes; rippling with the laughter of comedy; all atune with the lyric music of song; or synthetised into a story instinct with life, in which the puppets of thought play their parts as though they were "live men and women—live with sorrow and sin, with pain and with pas-

sion." A story in which Homer, Dante, Cervantes, Goldsmith, or Thackeray shall make the gods in Aristophanes' heaven wish the cloud cuckoo-town out of the way, that they might bend down to hear the moving tale.

This something, which I am impotent to define, we call Art. It reigns, whether we know it or not, over all our lives. It rules by laws fixed and immutable. It may be seen through a glass darkly, or it may be to the beholder a beatific vision; but it remains the same ever, no matter with what eyes men will look upon it. Greek, Roman, Egyptain, Gothic, Renaissance, Pre-raphaelite, Impressionist—these are but words, showing men's imperfect conceptions, or showing, if you will, how far its sceptre stretches, and how wide its kingdom is.

Art. Not sculptures, not pictures, not plays, not cunningly devised phrases, but

that which produces these things, and governs their production by rigid laws—but by laws so apparently elastic that no two men are agreed as to their limits. Art,—from which these things sprang and have their being. Which was before the Myths, before Homer, before the Sagas, before Phidias and Michael Angelo, or these men and these things could never have been—which the Greek called phantasy, the Roman called vision; and which we call imagination.

Seated on her throne—Queen Regnant—Imagination creates, inspires; fills the mind with a divine afflatus; guides the hand of painter; fills the poet's mouth with songs; arrays in tuneful procession melodies and harmonies to charm the ear; moves upon the mind of the writer until he sees new worlds, thinks new thoughts; brings into being out of the mental mist new creatures, living new lives. This, and

more, is the province of art. It brings to pass. It touches with its sceptre the cerebral mass of grey matter within a bony casket, and in a moment Ezekiel's army stands upon its feet and lives; Homer's Troy is besieged and defended by heroes; Virgil sits beneath the shady beech; Clytemnestra goes to murder with tragic step; Lucian ascends like a rocket, past stars and planets, until he reaches the City of Lanterns; the Bishops touch the shores of the Island of the Seven Cities, and then burn their ships behind them; More goes all content through Utopia; and Sydney in Arcadia roams through woods and pastures new; the whole world of ghosts, phantasms born of brain, walk, speak, sing, live in story, song, on canvas, in marble, in musical pœans and chords. The air is filled with images of wrath, of love, of beauty, of grotesqueness, of power; and only his eye can behold

them who has bowed in willing subjection to the sovereign art, under her greatest name—Imagination.

Art is long. Let me give you one or two personal instances of not only the power of art over the mind, but of the long endurance of its sway. Thirty-five years ago, I sat one night in the gallery of Drury Lane Theatre. The play was Racine's "Athalie" — the actress Rachel. To this moment the door of the chamber of my brain, in which that memory is stored, has remained open. All the glamour of the scene ; every supple movement of the stately queen ; nay, the very play of her features, and the gleam of her awful dark eyes, are as vivid now as they were then. I could not understand the French lines she declaimed, but I could understand her—and that gallery, filled with French refugees mad with enthusiasm, the tier upon tier of human

beings held spellbound,—more by the Rachel than by the play,—the terrible concentration of all the human passions within the body of one poor weak woman, manifested in the eyes, the step, the voice, the soul of the actress ; the supremacy she exercised, as an artist, above all the supremacy of an ordinary queen, are as clear to my mental vision as though these things were of yesterday.

At an earlier date, I saw the “*Tempest*” played, for the first time in my short life. I went home at one o’clock in the morning, treading not upon the hard London pavement, but upon clouds—transported at one bound from foggy Cockaigne to that isle of sweet noises in the far away southern sea ; and to this day, notwithstanding all I have read, and seen, and heard since, the Ariel with whom I fell in love as she descended from the skies and opened her mouth in sweet song ; the

Caliban, son of Sycorax, raving out his curses ; and Prospero, waving his wand of power, are to me just what they were then, and I am fain to be content to have them remain so.

More than thirty years ago, I read a story of a certain man who found a pair of slippers, and to whom misfortunes came ample and many through possession of those slippers. Since then, I have seen the very bazaar through which he walked, the Cadi before whom he was taken. I have felt all the charm of Eastern life and glowing colour. I have hobnobbed and jostled with the people and the things of the Arabian Nights ; but I have never re-read that story, and yet it is as fresh to-day (not as seen by modern lights, but as I read it then), and as powerful in the hold it has upon my mind, as the story of Jael, as told by Mr. Herring, which I read but a day or two ago.

If these things had been merely natural—realistic—they would not have touched me. They could not have lived so long,—but the spirit of the poet was abroad in them. The conceptive power of the artist reached out to all the possibilities of art, and realized many of them in such a manner as to impress even a youthful mind with their near approach to perfection. Play, story, actress, moved by sovereign art, touched a chord whose vibrations never cease.

By which I mean, dull discourser that I am, that to be merely natural is not enough. The Realistic is but one-half (scarcely that) of life. It only touches the surface. It is the lowest revelation of art. It is like the old cosmographer's world, it has an edge to its plane, beyond which its professors cannot go without dropping into abysmal space. It is wanting in possibilities, in atmosphere; its vision is limited, and, unlike

Columbus, it goes forth to seek no new world. It knows nothing of infinite distance. Like a myopic eye, it sees best and most but a little way off. Realism is a science, not an art.

The Idealistic is nearer the throne. It has eyes that pierce the gloom and see there what others are blind to. It knows there are things that go deeper than the senses; things that reveal themselves to the artist and the poet, but are often unperceived of men. Penetrating, pervading, encircling, is the *spirit* of nature—the subtle substance of the unseen which is about field and mountain, cloud and tree, man and all living things. The naturalist stops at the *form*, and is content—but the artist, who can write, or paint, or act an idyll, stands at the gate of the spiritual kingdom, and feels the mystic influences of the world that now is, and of the world that is to come. As you

look at his work you perceive how wide are his sympathies, and how deeply sensitive he is to the things that appeal to the most susceptible natures. Twilight is with him something more than form and colour; there is in it infinite calm and rest. His skies are ever-changing pictures of cloud and light, and they appeal to something within you that the naturalist leaves untouched. Demeter is abroad, but behind her, unperceived by many, is Persephone, casting unearthly glamour over the scene until earth and Hades blend, and the responsive mind sees not at what point are mingled the unseen and the seen.

When a landscape touches you (not simply pleases you), the spirit of nature is manifest, and the spirit that is behind nature, animating her with life and colour, and lending to the scene charms that seem not of this world, is

there too. Persephone—imagination—art.

The man who prides himself upon being an Impressionist is apt to pretend he has found these things when he has not. In his effort to depict too much he portrays too little, and he is foggy and bleared, as though he had looked at nature through drunken eyes.

But why these names—Realistic, Idyllic, Pre-raphaelite, Impressionist, and what not? Surely art is not sectarian. True to itself it despises eccentricities of name and method. Its followers are under the law, and he who breaks a rule of art forgets the sacredness of his vocation. He is not a trifler at play; he is not a toady, ready to bow to any demand of a gaping crowd; he is not a seller of his birthright for a mess of pottage; a pot-boiling maker of pictures; a Grub Street hack; a mechanical adaptor of French

plays ; or a clothiers' poet. If he is, heaven send him another calling, and a single eye to its fulfilment with credit to himself.

I know I shall be met with the now very commonplace, but incorrect, remark "*that it is all a matter of taste.*"

It is not so. It *is* a matter of taste—but of taste firm in its allegiance to sovereign art. It would seem as if "taste" were the only word in the dictionary to which men might attach any definition that suits them. Unless we except the word "orthodoxy," no phrase has been so uncertain in its meaning as "taste." But taste has its limits. It is under obedience to laws—its canons are well defined ; and it must not be bandied about from hand to hand, and from mind to mind, until it is corrupted beyond all recovery, and has become a thing of ignorance and scorn. There is an impression abroad

that what pleases is good. But before the reader of verse or prose can read aright; before the beholder of a picture can see with unclouded eyes; before you are qualified to sit in the critic's row and judge of a play; and before you can drink in sweet sounds of music with ears that open to heavenly harmonies—you must learn—you must pass painful nights and weary days—you must watch for moods and whims of ever-changing nature—you must acquire that acutely sensitive sympathy which (to use a miserably cant phrase) brings you in touch with all things living and dead. More than that, before you can rise to the higher knowledge, you must walk with Persephone through Hades; rise with Milton to heaven's gate; wander through the "Inferno" with Dante, in order that you may know there is something more in art than is material and worldly, and for which you must look in

the hell beneath, in the heavens above, or in the world of grey matter wherein imagination reigns supreme.

He who paints, or writes, to please the popular taste, does these things to meet the fashion of the people. He does what is fatal to his art. He commits mental suicide. He kills within himself the highest, noblest part of his nature. He herds with Comus when he ought to be keeping company with angels. He who works simply to sell—sells—but he sells his soul for dross, and leaves an aching void in his heart. That is if he be an artist—but if he be a mere maker of verses, an ingenious concoctor of narratives, or a commonplace painter of pictures, and nothing more, he remains unaffected. He has acquired a mechanical art, and is proficient in it, but he is as far removed from all the finer influences as though he were but a dauber on china plates,

or a spoiler of good Whatman's paper, under the guise of a hand painter of Christmas cards.

In nine cases out of ten, what is called taste is but another name for fashion. It suddenly attacks somebody, who infects somebody else, and so the complaint spreads, until society forgets itself and becomes a prey to a mania; and, when the mania reaches to the lower strata of social life and intellect, the disease is fearful to behold. Art is besieged in her own palace, and hirelings and lackeys act as kings and queens in the courts outside. Once let the edge be taken off the fine perception of the beautiful and the true, and you will be playing with a weapon which will not be a sword of the spirit dividing the marrow of the soul and the bone of the body asunder, but a rough, jagged implement of warfare, no better than the flint axe of the dwellers in caves.

It were laughable, were it not after all serious, to think of the directions in which public taste has gone.

Take two instances.

Many years ago now, flower-shows became a fashion. It was a polite taste to forget the old-fashioned garden flowers, and to admire certain exotics which were duly exhibited for admiration. So far, good, perhaps, because there can be no doubt that the exotics were worthy of all admiration. But suddenly it struck a certain gentleman that English flowers, and some foreign ones, needed but cultivation in certain directions, in order to produce results which would accord with a standard of taste—or perfection, as he called it—invented by himself. He took a well-known flower. See here, he said, this flower has been trifled with by nature, who has been sportive with it. Observe its petals, they are unequal in size, they

are inflexed when they ought to be reflexed; its colours are not equally distributed, they are spotted, or splashed about the face of the bloom in confusion; its stamens are too long or too short, they ought to be of such a length that the anthers shall be level with the throat of the corolla. It droops when it ought to be erect.

So he set up what he called Principles of Taste, by which he was to judge of the perfection of flowers, and the florist set to work torturing and twisting nature until she produced flowers which did not deviate one infinitesimal point from Mr. Glenny's standard. An exact circle of petals was a Godsend. An equal distribution of colour over the floral parts was a beauty, and in order to obtain these advantages, all the artificial aids of the chemist, and the ingenuities of the mechanic, were brought into play. A

florist's flower became a thing at which nature laughed, and from which art (lover of nature as she is), turned away her head, refusing to behold.

A few years ago some poor sorrowful soul, being disgusted with the frivolities of funerals, and filled with a simple desire to do a natural act of affection, refused to hang a long black streamer on his hat; and out of the love he had for some dead brother cast a little flower on his coffin, and threw another on his grave. Simple flowers they were, expressive of the simplicity and sincerity of true friendship. Some one else saw him do it, and liking it, thought he would do the same. A third person followed, under the impression that it was the correct (observe that the word correct does not always mean "right") thing. A fourth, not caring for it, still caught the example, and did it because it seemed to be the

fashion—until public “taste” set in in that direction; and it was no longer the simple blue forget-me-not, or the white rose from the garden corner, laid upon the grave from love—but the vagary of so-called taste emptied cart loads of the most costly flowers of the world in bewildering heaps upon the tomb, and turned our God’s acres into imitations of the last resting places of that at once most artistic and inartistic of men, the Frenchman of Paris. Nor is this all; tawdry artificial scraps of coloured rag, bits of enamelled metal, hideous black bordered cards, are scattered in heaps in our churchyards beside the rotting leaves and flowers, until the sight is sickening to behold.

And this is “*taste*.” This is the rebellious demand made upon art by those who have never been trained in her school, and who seem ignorant of her simplest laws, and her most elementary lessons.

See what comes of painting pictures to sell to buyers such as these ; of writing books to please a multitude that are after the flesh, and not after the spirit. The artist, be he writer, painter, or musician, who does this, does it at his peril. He gains nothing but the scanty lentil cake of Egyptian bondage ; and, if there be any reverence for his calling left, he will feel how humiliated and enslaved he is. If he does not feel this, then he had better apprentice himself to a cordwainer, and make honest handsewn shoes for the rest of his days.

I have seen men in raptures over the imitation of a gauze veil in stone or in colour, forget that the picture should be painted for the face, and not for the piece of lace, which could be had more natural and more effective from the first haberdasher's shop. You, too, have seen how people could spend hardly

acquired money of these days upon Italian stone-carvings, and miserably painted and gilded sculpture of recent exhibitions, while they turned faces of scorn upon good and cheap copies of works which the artists of the world, after twenty centuries of effort, have not equalled, much more surpassed. And you probably have seen, as I have, the intellect of a man or woman, coming away by rail from sunny Genoa—wasted in ecstasy over the gaudy and vulgar picture on the front of an Italian country house, of a woman waving her handkerchief from a window to the passengers of a passing train.

If some artistic Hercules would but sweep the filthy stable clean of all the accumulated art-rubbish of the last twenty years, the atmosphere might be fit to breathe, and we might hope for better days.

These efforts to satisfy popular taste,

whether they be rhyming, music, or picture-painting, do but conduct their makers to the vestibule of Art's palace. There is many a stair to climb, and many a pavilion to pass through ere the anteroom is reached, and the curtains drawn aside to reveal the chamber of majesty.

For all that, we need not look for perfect art, but rather for that which has the perfection of art in it. Macbeth may be the tragic Thane even in Mr. Garrick's periwig, and Roxana may be a true queen though she stalk across the stage in hoops and furbelows.

But now, that the amateur pseudo-artistic craze is nearly over, we have to encounter another foe. There is being thrust upon us that side of art in which imagination plays no part. Science is pitted against literature. The technical instead of the artistic is said to be the want of the age. Tubal Cain is to the

front again ; and Homer, in his blindness, has groped his way into a retired corner. The child is to be drilled until he marches and stamps to the sound of little facts, while his thoughts—the only good thing in him—are left to lie fallow. The mechanical arts are to save the world, the British portion of it particularly ; while the art of imagination—of invention of the rarest and most spiritual kind—is snubbed as being outside the common sense of men. As if, the poet, the painter, the creator of ideas, the builder of words and phrases, the prophet, the seer, had not invented ages before the man who put his inventions into material form. As if the mere analyser of a dead language, the disentangler of words, the exponent of a constructed sentence, scholar though he be, were superior to the man whose art made that sentence—that array of words, instinct with life—

filled it with music, made it ring in men's ears and memories like an organ's diapason ; vivified it, not only with eloquent sound and subtle meaning, but with thought, which, like the blazing brands of Samson, sets other thoughts aflame with a fire which neither time nor fashion can extinguish.

Last summer I had a very pleasant holiday, during which I found Paradise. I had climbed a hill through steep, narrow, ancient lanes and alleys, stopping now and then to catch a sight of the Northern Sea. I had passed open doorways, through which I caught glimpses of gardens all a-glow with summer flowers. Here there was a seventeenth century mansion abandoned to the mercies of a fisherman's family ; beside it was a warm red brick dwelling of Anne's time, where many an eighteenth century family gathering had been held.

Climbing the steep lanes, at last I reach one running along the foot of the Castle ruins, while below it, and above it, and all around, are the four or five burial grounds which have gathered about the old church at different periods. This lane has high walls on either side, and I can see in its length about three houses, the rest being garden wall. I stand against one moss-grown buttress, and rest and reflect. I can hear the murmur of the sea down below ; and the humming of a great bee on a visit from a Yorkshire moor. There is music in the air, the music that is not of braying brass-bands, nor of nigger minstrels. There are scents abroad as though odorous flowers were not far off. I have all the lane to myself, and, being undisturbed, I can see through the open railings of a garden, in which stands a house. In the garden-beds are red and white and pink poppies, nodding

bells of campanulas, great double peonies, sweet williams, with frilled borders to their petals, eschscholtzias, like refined gold suddenly changed to velvet; marigolds, with great maroon eyes, roses, fit for Titania, mimulas, spotted like the leopard, yellow laburnum, hanging like flakes of golden snow, petunias, purple, scarlet, white, striped, sea-pinks, calceolarias, ladies' slippers, columbines, larkspurs, climbing honeysuckle, red valerian, and purple pansies, for thoughts, with the ghost of Ophelia weeping over them.

On the side of the house wall was a little board, which informed the passer-by that it was No. 8, and on the other side of the lane was another which said simply "Paradise," I was then in Paradise—No. 8, Paradise, with a green door, a great brass knocker, and a garden fit for fairies, lay before me—and through a side door in the wall came an old gentle-

man, in whom I had no difficulty in recognising the genius of the place, Eve was within doors, and Adam had donned a modern suit of clothes which convinced me at first sight that he had once had something to do with marine engineering. And so it proved. He kindly rescued me from my reflections. He showed me his flowers—lent me his great telescope; introduced me to Eve; and then with a precipitancy which took away my breath, got on the subject of British interests, and the decadence of British trade and skill. He was a nice old gentleman, well acquainted with the physical globe—but I am fain to say he was dogmatic. Most people with truth on their side are.

I ventured to remark to him that there had been somewhat said of late on the need of more technical education before the resources of the English nation could be properly developed in the direction of manufacture and construction.

I had evidently hit his hobby on the head. He snorted forth a reply.

"You believe, I suppose," said he, "that progress made in France and Belgium and Germany implies retrogression in England." "My dear sir," I said, "just now, I believe nothing. I would rather hear what you believe. I only know this, that the air seems filled with groans and wails concerning the decadence of English arts and manufactures."

"Look here," said he, "in matters wherein honest workmanship and intelligent conceptions of art and science are concerned, I possess the old English belief in the superiority of my country over all the nations of the earth."

"How then," I meekly remarked, "do you account for the agitation raging on this subject?"

"How? why by the fact that this English nation has no faith in itself; it

never had. It shows its faith by its works, not by its beliefs and assertions. The fogs and easterly winds generate grumbling, which is the national virtue—but, they do more, they drive the nation to work, and from the time Cæsar landed down there in the South until now, the habit of the English people has been to grumble and work, work and grumble, until the finest navy in the world has scattered itself over all the waters of the earth, and Smith, Jones, Macintosh, and O'Callaghan, have planted themselves, from Hudson's Bay to Terra del Fuego, on every inch of land that will grow wheat, cotton or rice, or supply a nibble of grass to a Shorthorn or a Southdown." "My friend," said he, with a fine scorn, as he sniffed up the sea air, "never mind what they say about the continental nations taking the wind out of our sails. It's a mistake—a mere cry of alarm and

childish fear. The descendant of the man who grumbled at Cæsar, and kicked his standard-bearer into twelve feet of water off Shoreham, grumbled as he threw the bridge over the Menai Straits; and workmen, who never entered a French Lycée, or gave themselves up to the syllabus of a German University, are working, in a thousand ways, with unerring skill, and with such success, that they can afford to throw a snap of a hundred engines to Belgium, a thousand bomb-shells to France, or tons of quinine to Germany. What we want, sir, is a little more grumbling, and a little less puling and whining — but, more than all we want the pluck to believe in ourselves.”

He said a good deal more, I believe, for he had not finished when I left him. For I had fallen into a reverie; and went down the hill again, out of Para-

dise, to where they were celebrating the Queen's Jubilee with rows of Japanese lanterns, and innumerable yards of French muslin.

But that old man of the sea left his mark.

I said to myself, as I say now : This English people, with British, Gaelic, Roman, Danish, Saxon, Norman blood of the very best running through its veins, has too much vitality to die. More than that, it cannot die. Look at these pale but beautiful images of the works Greece and Rome have left us. They are part of our heritage of art. They have taught us lessons, have permeated the national mind with a love of the beautiful and a great sympathy with the good. Besides them, there have come to us poems and histories, myths and fables, glowing with the warmth of fancy natural to the dwellers along the Mediterranean shores, filled

with the deeds of heroes and the wisdom of the gods.

Open that old book you have at home, and you are face to face with kings, prophets, poets, historians, with histories, biographies, stories, parables, proverbs, and the recital of a life unique in the history of this planet, for the love and fervour, for the wisdom and profoundest philosophy it contains. Do all these count for naught? Like Saul of Tarsus, *we* are Hebrews of the Hebrews, we have been fed upon Hebrew lore and Jewish fancy. We have been nursed in the lap of the Semitic writings, and we are no nearer death than they are.

To us has come the Greek imagination, the Roman vigour, the Gothic strength, the insular self-reliance.

And what have we done with this heritage of art, written and picturesque? We have done this. We have changed

it into the sap of our national life. We have built up from the plasmic material a body and a brain, which are fed—not upon primers alone—not upon easy methods of learning this or that—not upon cribs and crams—but upon the noblest literature and the completest history of art the world has yet seen. Make a holocaust of all books but Shakspeare—let their ashes be blown to the four winds—but, having Shakspeare, you have the bone and sinew, the blood and brain of a nation bound to live and rule.

But we need no fire of sacrifice to purge our letters or our art. Hebrew, Greek, Roman, Assyrian and Egyptian have left us their wealth. We have not wrapped the talent in a napkin. We have put it out to usury. We have added to it. Added what? Alfred, Chaucer, Shakspeare, Milton, Dryden, Pope, Johnson, De Foe, Burns, Dickens,

Thackeray, Locke, Scott, Tennyson, Arne, Purcell, Benedict, Handel, Turner, Callcott, Prout, Cox, and a whole host of the immortals; but besides these we have gone abroad and ransacked the desolate places and robbed them of their treasures. Ephesus, Olympus, Rome, Pompeii, Egypt, Goshen, have yielded up their riches. All the inexhaustible treasure of Italian art—never to be counted up—belongs to us. Dante is as much ours as he is Italy's. Goethe can hold the English stage longer than he ever held the German. The intellect of our child of two hundred years across the water is ours, and no man writes there for men but he feels the English spirit strong within him.

Are these things to be forgotten, and these legacies—well spent—to be as nothing, and this strength turned into weakness, at the thought of an Act of Parliament regulating technical

instruction in schools, coming, in its childish feebleness, to rescue us before we are perishing ?

I do not think we need trouble ourselves.

But I will tell you what we need trouble about. We need trouble to preserve, in all its integrity, our allegiance to art, so that we shall serve her out of a good conscience and a pure affection. We want sincerity. We want to lose the fear of doing a good thing because it is good. We want to be superior to the prevailing cant that nothing pays but that which is successful. We want to learn that it is not wealth, not learning, but a strict and loving obedience to the highest laws of life—that alone can save us ; and the laws of life are the laws of art. Above the riches of the world, the coffers of kings, and the treasuries of nations, is the wealth of a mind that bows before such

a mistress. There is a little word—“*right*”; apply that word—in all its infinite meaning—to the production of book, journal, picture, music, and they will be as perfect as desire can make them.

The gifts given to the true artist are unspeakable. All creation sits before him clothed in green, purple, gold; altogether unapproachable except by the rules that govern his art. But he sees more in blind John Milton—looking with shut eyes upon the glories open eyes never yet saw—than in all the magnificence of forest and hill.

To some minds, the sublimity of ocean storms, the crash of earthquakes, the splendour of the heavens, transcend all other things; but the true artist sees beyond these,—storms that beat against the gates of heaven; men who snatch fire from the altars of the gods; convulsions that shake the universe of distant stars and planets.

Before machinery ; before the handling of the human tool, whether pen, brush, or mallet ; art was—the art of inventive thought. Before a keel touched the far-away shores of the world, imagination—Ulysses like—had reached the unknown sands.

The new leaven is at work, but it is the same leaven as of old. Brain is nearer heaven than body. The peace upon earth that shall come ; the federation of the world that must come to pass—the end of despotisms, and the subjugation of evil—the dreams of the poet ; the visions of the painter ; the songs of the musician ; all these shall be fulfilled, because “neither you nor I, nor all our pens, can fight against the laws that rule the arts.”

**The Triumphal Procession of
Ivan Turguénieff.**

THE TRIUMPHAL PROCESSION OF IVAN TURGUÉNIEFF.

Not many years since we had, in England, a very brief Indian summer, during which, for a day or two, I had occasion to be in London. With me was a friend—genial, learned in matters artistic and literary, a lover of nature, and a known painter of pictures. I will call him “the Artist.”

We had finished our work, and had spent a busy, not to say wearisome, morning, in going the round of what exhibitions were then open, after which we went up the Thames in search of quiet and the picturesque. We found both. We found more. By the riverside, in sight of a great fountain that gushes up and spreads itself out in the midst of

an artificial lake of water (on the Surrey side), and in sight of giant elms whose shadows have swayed to and fro in the Thames waters these centuries past, we found the "Doves,"—not the complacent cooing birds of that ilk, but an inn overhanging the river—an old coffee-house, rich in memories of men, of sunny mornings and moonlight nights upon the tidal highway of the world; odorous of recollections of Cowley, of Pope, of Walpole, of Collins, of Denham, of Gray, and of a host of poets who had floated by in skiff and barge—an inn, moreover, where Thomson wrote his *Seasons*, and where the late Duke of Sussex smoked a long clay Broseley pipe, untroubled by royal cares or charity committees; an inn where, of all places in the world, one might be at ease, and, being at ease, might fall into reveries, and take to dreaming waking dreams.

For all about this place walk ghosts. Under the trees of the old Mall, planted by the widow of wicked old Rowley, when his brother James was king, these phantoms troop by, or linger, sniffing terrestrial air—poets, historians, artists, actors, divines, all making ghostly holiday, and forgetting for awhile the Elysian fields.

We two sit bewitched by the memories of the place, but still more by the delicious quiet. Behind lies the roar of the great city, now but a bee-like hum; before us drops the tide on its way to the sea; all about us is a charmed atmosphere. The water laps lazily against the lime-tree pillars of the wooden terrace where we sit. A swan floats by on liquid gold, transmuted by that old alchemist, the sun. Voices in the distance come like cadences of music, and make you think of the Canadian boat-song, and of the late Mr.

Thomas Moore ; and the great brown-sailed barges, laden with scented hay and clover, go down with the tide with a delightful leisure soothing to a weary man.

The witchery of an Indian summer afternoon spent upon the upper Thames is in the air, and the Artist, bound by its spell, can only sit in helpless ecstasy, make cigarettes and smoke. I cannot make cigarettes, and can only smoke with distressing inefficiency ; but I hold my tongue, pretend to puff, and watch eagerly and curiously the lovely vaporous rings of cerulean blue which my companion deftly projects into the upper air. He is not a man who uses words with the same facility with which he wields a brush, but he *can* talk ; and at last, *apropos* of a picture we had seen in the morning, he opens his mouth, and speaks, in the easy tone of a confident man, of old Marlowe, the

dramatist; then, by a curious tangential mental movement, of Burns; with at last a harking back to that inexhaustible theme, the abstraction we call Shakspeare, and the concrete things we call his plays. The two idyllic plays, *Cymbeline* and the *Tempest*, are what we discuss. We agree very well; indeed, we are too idle to disagree. It is *dolce far niente* with us, and we don't care to awake to the painful reality, which cannot be far off, in the shape of an express train guaranteed to carry us back to the world and work in five hours. I feel this, so I let the Artist smoke and talk, while I listen and look. And as I look, lo! there is no more Thames; the ghosts are still on the Mall, but the air they have brought with them spreads itself until it displaces the air that is about the "Doves," and I hear, as though very far off, the Artist's voice, like the

soft cooing of a pigeon going to rest, or like something which has found its way to my ears through immeasurable distances. If Ariel descended swiftly from the heavens and dropped at my feet, I shouldn't be surprised. If Puck had tickled me with an invisible straw, I should have offered no remark of wonder. If Titania had passed by, and, mistaking me for Bottom, had made violent love to me, I fear I should have taken it as a thing of course, not to be lightly considered, but to be regarded as a due recognition of my capacity for love-making, and my undying affection for a fairy queen. The genius of the place was too much for me. They had given us mandragore and henbane in the coffee. My spiritual eyes were open, and I saw visions.

I am in the White Isle of dreams. Instead of the feeble lapping of the waters against the "Doves," I catch the

blessed music of the sea as it sweeps up the yellow sands, playing upon the pebbles as though they were the notes of an instrument. I am on the enchanted isle, full of sweet sights and sounds, never seen but once by mortal eyes, then to disappear, not again to be found in maps of the Southern Sea, but only in dreams. I am walking with one Shakspeare upon the shore fringing the whilom kingdom of the exiled Prospero. I can feel the balmy air through which Ariel sped to do his master's bidding, and watch the silver foam of the turquoise sea as it sweeps up to my feet. In a moment Caliban passes by, groaning under the giant logs he carries, and muttering devilish spells whereby he may work evil to the Lord of the Isle. As he disappears in the wood behind, Prospero, stately and erect like a king, but more like a gentleman, who, I take it, is more than a mere king, turns a

corner of the rocks and looks meditatively towards the Sicilian shore.

These two men are the masters of the place; the one, offspring of hellish Sycorax and genius of evil; the other, holding him in temporary subjugation by virtue of the pains with which he racks his savage body, being helped thereto by the powers of heaven. The one, brute and beast to his very soul, and foul with uncounted sins; the other, lord of himself, and having sway over the things of the earth and the beings of the air. Caliban, unwilling slave, biting at his chain, full of murky thoughts, unholy desires, carrying on a perpetual war with the spirit—if, indeed, he have much of the spirit within him—to whom the light has come in feeble glimmers, and for whom the world has no sweetness—a savage, not wholly beast, but having brain and heart which may yet grow, with

Prospero's help, until he becomes master of the world. Prospero, wielding spells that come of knowledge and of research, versed in the arts by exercise of which the spirits of the air, and the winds that toss the sea into storms; the thunder that is as "God moving overhead;" the lightning, rifting rocks, and scarring trees, and dazzling the eyes of drowning men, are used to purpose, and kept as willing servants. A man with eyes for far off things, with "vision and faculty divine," gentle, forbearing, holding talk with nature, and such a Master of Art that he can create, build up brave words into masterly sentences, and, after he has used his phantasms of the brain, make, with one wave of his wand—

"Those golden palaces, those gorgeous halls,
With furniture superlatively fair,
Those stately courts, those sky-encountering walls,
Evanish all like vapours in the air."

He holds a lordship, this Prospero,
under the Sovereign—Art!

At this point the Artist, thinking I was asleep, arose and stretched himself, and proposed that we should depart. But, as we passed under the shady portal of the "Doves," and heard the rustling of the yellow leaves on the old elms, and the dip of passing sculls in the placid water—we both felt like the mediæval folk who used to see armies in the air, and hear the noise of battles in the clouds. Portents were in the sky. Something was going on somewhere which found its way by invisible tracks to our inner senses.

"O'er all there hung the shadow of a fear,
A sense of mystery the spirit daunted,
And said as plain as whisper in the ear,
The place is haunted."

No wonder! for afar off, and yet by
some occult means brought very near,

was at that moment happening a surprising thing.

The greatest novelist Russia had ever known had died in exile, in Paris. While we sat at the "Doves," the body of Turguénieff, on a gorgeous car, covered with a golden pall, buried beneath wreaths and flowers, and over all a canopy of cloth of gold, was on its way from the St. Petersburg railway station to the cemetery. Slowly defiling through the silent streets followed 200,000 men and women, gathering numbers as they went. Men from Finland, from Poland, from distant Siberia, from the frowning Caucasus, from the remotest Steppes of Central Asia, Slav and Teuton, Frank and Celt, one compact body of living men in the wake of a poor human casket out of which the soul had fled. It was the greatest funeral procession the Russian people had ever seen. It was the

largest array of men with brains, journalists, artists, authors, the city on the Neva, or any city of the empire, or perhaps any city of the world, had beheld. Its splendour outdid the grandeur of the coronations of the czars, in magnitude it exceeded the review of an Imperial army. And yet there was no military uniform, no official livery in all their ranks. For five long hours art, science, literature, paraded their representatives as they paid their last respects to the dead, while neither speech, nor song, nor applause were heard to break the tramp of the multitude. All the forces of the government—except direct military force—had been employed to spoil the triumph; but from first to last, the *Times* correspondent affirmed, it had a triumphal air, as though the dead it sought to bury was a conqueror coming home from war.

But the concourse in St. Petersburg's streets, and the procession to the grave, was but part of the story to be told.

Day and night, all along the road from Paris, were watchers for the train. The government seized the body at the frontier, after it had come through Germany, and would have placed it in a shed amongst sheep and pigs, but the priest of the village exclaimed against the infamous sacrilege, removed the body to the church, and "threatened the police with all the penalties attaching to the act of stealing the sanctified remains of an orthodox Christian from the sanctuary of the church."

Right up to the Russian capital the people watched from Thursday until after Sunday, day and night, crowding the stations. Waited with uncovered heads as the bier passed by ; falling on their knees, kissing the coffin ; while

in place after place, priests performed the burial service over the remains.

But beyond this, exceeding by its pathos, and excelling in its display of feeling all that came before or went after, was this :—In the dead of night, the darkness being so dense that nothing could be seen, the train was stopped at a station by a crowd which would not be appeased until it had groped its way to the coffin to salute it. They gathered so thickly that there was danger of death to some of them. Then, M. Stasulevitch called through the gloom for a child. Over the heads of the people there was passed a little girl. Gently, through the heaps of flowers that filled the carriage, they led the child to the bier. She kissed it again and again ; and then, as the train moved on, she stood by the roadside, the vicarious recipient of the kisses of every man, woman, and child, who rained upon her

the showers of passionate tenderness they would fain have poured upon the place wherein their dead author lay.

And yet this man was not great, like Scott or Dickens, or like Goldsmith, in his ability to depict men and awaken deep emotions. But he was to his own land as these were to theirs, and the Russians recognised his greatness—even Tolstoi, his rival, could not eclipse that. It was not a funeral march through that week of days and nights, nor a tearful pageant of woe, but a triumphal procession. A silent, solemn protest of the supremacy of brain and heart against the tyranny of force and diplomacy. No “Dead March” in *Saul* this, but the march of the new leaven through an empire so vast that no school geography can teach our pupils its utmost limits.

The incident contrasts strangely with that scene in the Temple, when women

broke their hearts, and men wept like children, as poor Goldsmith was carried to his grave. There were no tears turning to dew-drops, as they fell upon the simple flowers, as there were in the old Abbey when Dickens was laid to rest. They had no stories to tell of him, as they had of Johnson, how he had made his house a refuge for the sick and old; carried a world-forsaken woman on his back out of the midnight slush of Fleet Street; and stood bare-headed and penitent in Lichfield Market Place, in memory of a slighted father.

It was not so much the heart of the nation that was moved as its head. Underground Russia was in the procession. Ghosts from forgotten Poland and Hungary, and from Siberian cities and mines, and prisons, walk side by side with living men, with whom this pageant is less a thing to weep about

than to sing, almost jauntily, as though a song of freedom stirred the air.

When a king of Spain dies, they carry him in gorgeous state to the vaults where his fathers lie. But before the great gates of the sepulchre swing back,—on that side where are the dead,—a simple monk appears. “Who comes here?” he demands. They proclaim the royal titles, the princely honours, the recent sway of this former king. But the keeper of the tomb knows him not. The monk makes no sign, but keeps his gates sealed. But when they acknowledge that it is the *man*, and not the monarch, they bring, the mere human body which once held a soul, the portals open, and once more the vaults of the Escorial echo to the tread of men.

So, if they had brought this dead novelist and proclaimed that he was a kaizer, a prince, no response would have

been heard, they of the tombs would not have known him through the glamour of his earthly honours; but when he is brought from his exile with all his train of banners and flowers, and uncounted mourners, and it is urged that he is an artist, resting his fame upon no fleeting glory or deeds of arms, or statescraft; not upon lineage or wealth, but upon the creations of his brain, which have stirred a people's pulses into tumultuous life—then the gates of the House of the Immortals fly open, and Art receives her own, feeling that she is glorified in her son!

At the grave in the cemetery the procession stopped. They buried him. They made no florid orations; they sang no hymns. But he did not stop. There and then he takes his place in the rear of a great procession of the immortals. While living he was a prince of literature, a vicegerent of sovereign art. Now

he casts an immortal shadow upon the world as he marches with the rest of the princes, in the ineffable light of the place wherein mind is supreme. No mere king lying forgotten in the dust of the Escorial, but, though dead, speaking—a power to set the heart beating and the brain all impulsive with thought, an inspirer of living song in living men.

And here I take up the thread I dropped in my former discourse. Art—literary, graphic, dramatic, plastic, musical, but above all, literary—is, through the imagination acting upon the life, to be the controlling force, the leaven of the nations.

It may sound trite and commonplace to repeat that the pen is mightier than the sword; that about the lordship of mind over matter there need be no doubt. I know that a laugh may weaken the force of the aphorism, and a sneer

may turn it into a truism. Nevertheless it continues to merit the serious belief of thoughtful men. In a new battle of books as against mere men, whether they be emperors or conscripts, the books will win, though no certain sound of victory be heard as yet. Councils come to nought, kings die, statesmen pass away; but you can no more kill a good book, or efface the memory of a beautiful picture, or forget the sweetness of a strain of music, than you can wipe out a star from the winter sky, or stay the incoming of the tide. In the art that shall teach them the worth of the commonest life, and show them the stairs that lead up to the higher life, that shall teach them that anything but Ichabod is written on their fellows, and show them the exceeding worthiness of God—in this is the leaven that shall leaven the lump, and in it lies the moral and political salvation of the race.

You will say I am trying to sing an old tune, to which the time lends no ear. I reply that even as the feeble, cracked voice of a ballad singer at a street corner is heard because of the song she sings, and the air it is set to—and not because of her singing—so I may claim your forbearance because of the burden of my song rather than for the manner in which I sing it.

In these days when fancy lies fallow, and art goes back into the past to find greatness; when cleverness is genius, and a mechanical skeleton of a tinkling rhyme is esteemed more than poetry; when men are of Paul, or Apollos, or Browning, or Shelley, or Villon, and nurse, and stroke, and bind in pretty covers their little reprints, or prate of the beauties of their man above all other men, and are all the while dead to Shakspeare and Raphael; when sport

(whatever that may mean) fills one whole enormous page of a daily newspaper; and fashion can, with a sneer, exile reason and faith and art to the farthest limbo; when men are no longer men but parties; then, I think, it is no impertinence to recall an old air—though one does it with a cracked voice—which has stirred the hearts of men ere this, and helped to lift the world forward.

Whims and fancies, self-interest and crass ignorance, will have their hour, and will fill the air with their tinnabulations, but the earth goes round still, and the stars do not stay in their courses. And, so, surely there will come a quiet moment when, in my corner, I can sit and sing, feebly and half-despairingly, an old song which has been sung before by thousands on the other side of the dropped curtain, in praise of the art which has been the

pabulum of life to countless generations. An art that—

Therein mighty minds were heard,
In mighty musings inly stirred,
And struggling outward for a word ;

A harmony that, finding vent,
Upward in grand ascension went,
Winged to a heavenly argument.

Up, upward, like a saint who strips
The shroud back from his eyes and lips,
And rises in apocalypse.

And those who heard it understood
Something of life in spirit and blood,
Something of Nature's fair and good.

So works this music on the earth,
God so admits it, sends it forth
To add another worth to worth.

For consider what this artist is,
whose fellow has just entered the real
Valhalla of heroes. He touches your
being as Joachim touches the vibrating
strings with his pliant bow, and the air
is filled with the majesty and sweetness

of sound, or the eyes are fascinated with images of beauty, or the emotions begin to play subtle tricks with your heart, until this man has you at his feet, an admiring slave. He leads you captive at his will, and, whether it be the author of the Book of the Beginnings, as he writes of angels sitting at the tent door in the balmy evening with Abraham, or of that wondrous pathetic scene of Hagar and her son in the wilderness; Homer singing of the siege of Troy; or Thackeray, catching the last words of Colonel Newcome, dying in the Charterhouse, he is prince and potentate, though withal the servant of a mightier than himself.

Consider this artist, I say, and think, with Mr. Oswald Crawford, "how very great a thing, how high and noble an art, is this of marshalling words and phrases together in prose and verse." While he lives the oracles are not

dumb. Great Pan is not dead, for Nature, many-tongued, speaks night and day. Nor is he dead or silent who sat at the feasts of princes, and saw the siege of cities, and gossiped in the peasants' huts, and who, nebulous being that he is, is known to us as Homer. Living yet in books are the men who gathered together the stories of the gods in Rome and Greece, or who sung of the great fairy world to be found in the heavens above, and in the earth beneath. Still in Plato is found "the pure Hellenic mind in its fullest bloom"—he "who made philosophy a work of the highest art, and, in seeking the true, never lost from his hand the clue of the fair and the good." Aristotle, who was the "creator of a universe of reason, and a father of Islam, of Germany, and of the Christian Church;" Leibnitz, Fichte, Bacon, Berkeley, Locke—what are these but "august

dynasties of thought bearing kingly names."

No calculations of ours can tell the men of art as they pass us by. The mind is appalled by their number, and by their greatness—Dante, now in the streets of Florence, now in the shades of the *Inferno*; Shakspeare, with his head above the clouds, but walking in flowery meads; Milton, blind without, but having open vision within, seeing Paradise, writing lines that march like the tread of an army, and stopping ever and anon to compose lyrics that dance as the tongue repeats them; Corneille, high sounding and declaiming; Moliere, like a picture of Watteau's, side by side with one of Hogarth's; Goethe, dramatist, song writer, politician, philosopher, all in one; Mozart, Beethoven, Mendelssohn, whose praises must be sung and cannot be uttered in plain words; Chrysostom

of the golden mouth ; Taylor of the honied speech. Who shall count them all ?

Truly the voice has not cried in the wilderness in vain. Persephone is avenged. Relegated by fable to Hades, she still walks the earth, and Orpheus follows in her wake, and when he plays we get sentimental and talk about the music of the spheres.

Why doesn't someone found a professorship of books, and find a man to fill the chair. Here are some of his qualifications. He must know tongues. He must have entered heart and soul into the thoughts and ways of the people for whom books have been written. He must have sat by their firesides, gossiped with them on the road, seen them in their assemblies. He must know the effect of a tropical sun upon the products of the mind, and have gauged the brain in the skull of an Eskimo

of Behring's Straits. He must have read books from his infancy, and known the fays, the gnomes, and all the giant-folk. He must have swept up the refuse of the bookstalls, and digested the newest work on a publisher's shelf. He must be a walking anthology of all men who ever set pen to paper, or quarrelled with a bookseller. He must have sailed right round the world of fiction, and trodden every path of literature. He must know how to love books, and to hate books; how to bind them in cloth of gold, and how to burn them. He must be of every creed; of all shades of philosophy; of no politics; of no country. He must regard old libraries as sacred temples; old bookshops as academic groves, and the butterman's as a place wherein waste products in the form of stray leaves may be utilised.

But with all this, he must understand the art which invests any book

with beauty or greatness. He must acknowledge the sway of the sovereign all his artists serve; and when, after all, he has done this and more, he will be but a poor professor, able to teach but a very small part of the work of his chair.

And what should he do who might find himself professor of pictures? How *could* he analyse the skies of Claude; or describe one of Constable's showers. All the glory of Angelo; the majesty of Raphael; the dignity of Da Vinci; the beauty of Titian, would but embarrass him and make him a stammering teacher at the best. He would feel like the dog Al Rakim (in the Koran) when, with Enoch's goat, he suddenly found himself, with his masters, the Companions of the Cave, in Paradise, dazzled by its glories, and stupified by the grandeur of the scene.

The true professor is Work. You can only learn that way. Inspiration

comes of labour—although I am bound to say it sometimes comes very late, and is often very feeble. But it is only by reading, reading—thinking, thinking—looking, looking—that you can hope to get behind the veil where Imagination sits as sovereign art.

Let no man delude you when he declares that phantasy and mental vision are but illusions. The Art of Thought, dealing as it does with things unseen and intangible, may be scouted and set at nought; but the things unseen are eternal—the things hands have not touched or eyes looked upon, are not seldom full of unspeakable music to the ears, and give unfailing satisfaction to the mind.

And now I am going to say a word concerning a Master of Art. I should not have attempted this if there were not signs of a growing disposition to turn a coward back upon him in his

old and feeble days. It is a fashion the public have—a sort of stoning of Stephen, as the whim may happen to take them. All things change except this habit of crucifying the old masters when we are tired of them.

Let me say something by way of preface.

Somehow, one feels that the air is getting a little clearer. There are signs of the return of the old happy times when our knowledge of pictures and of books was unaffected—sincere. For years past we have seen A-R-T—art, painted on the clouds; staring at us from windows, roofs; on window curtains; on hideous brown and red walls; on china and delft; on everything that could be scrawled upon with paint, pencil, or chalk. But straws show which way the wind blows; and the eyes are blessed as they see that A-R-T is disappearing from many of its old

haunts. The shop windows are changing their appearance; the terra-cotta plaques are on the wane; the china plates are getting bad stock; the drain pipes do not offer themselves for decoration; the bits of looking-glass do not invite you to paint them; the plates of opal and porcelain look as if they were about to be deposed; the hand-painted Christmas cards do not meet the approval of a discerning public; and the washed tambourines of a defunct minstrel troupe fail to find people silly enough to spread precious colour upon them. Thank heaven, I say, the air grows somewhat clearer.

We may hope, also, that the time will come when we shall no more see the puerilities of the people who affect Mr. Ruskin's style without his imagination and judgment. We have been passing through a long passionate pilgrimage, and we may hope that

we are near attaining rest from the wearisome preachments and miserable perversions of taste perpetrated in the name of Ruskin. The lily and the sunflower have bloomed, and had their day, and now it is time we descended to lower walks, where grow simpler but not less beautiful flowers.

Mr. Burne-Jones is not the end of art, any more than Mr. Morris is a master of political economy; nor is Mr. Swinburne a model for poets, any more than Mr. Walt Whitman is a master of rhyme. But if these erratic geniuses are not the highest masters in art, what shall be said of the younger fry of æsthetes, who, striving to imitate the cackle of a hen, fancy they have produced the brave crowing of the cock. I need say nothing now as to the disgust their pictures, lectures, and verses have produced in the minds of men who believe in a common sense art, and the

simple but vigorous English of Addison and De Foe.

The recluse of Coniston little knows what he has had to answer for every time he has put pen to paper. He has begotten a progeny who, aping his genius, have only picked up his eccentricity. They have mistaken senseless gush for poetry, and emasculated prose for the strong picturesque manner of their master; and what is worse, they shock the sense of decency, common to the ordinary English mind, trained in a literature largely free from the childishness they affect.

Now all this is a pity—first, because these disciples have hurt themselves; and next, because they have spoiled Mr. Ruskin, and at last brought the critics down upon him breathing slaughter.

Two critics have of late particularly distinguished themselves. One for the

second time, after an interval of many years; the other is a comparatively new man. Each admires Mr. Ruskin, but both abuse him unmercifully. As I said, just now, the tide is turning in their direction, and ill will fare the man who has lost that delusive, cruel thing, the popular favor.

The younger critic is what at school we used to call a sneak. He has got into the friendship of the master, has been hurt in some tender place, and then has turned round and ya-hooed him. The elder critic is slaughterous, incisive, uncompromising, just as he was thirty or forty years ago.

These men are right, but they are also wrong. Mr Ruskin has grounded his political economy upon the New Testament; that may be wrong. He has been inconsistent; he has been blindly prejudiced; he has been abusive; he is dogmatic.

It is so ; I fancy no man of common sense will deny it.

For all that, I say, "leave him alone." At any rate till you find a better man.

For, erratic as he is, dictatorial and petulant to a degree, he is yet worthy of respect, despite all his weaknesses. He is an old man now, and has done good service to the state. For that alone, he deserves indulgence. But you should forget his foibles for other reasons. Because he is an artist, and, as well, a Master of Art. Few men have drawn better pictures ; no man, unless it were Sir Joshua Reynolds, has written with greater authority. He is a poet. He can build up sentences until they assume the very shapes of clouds, of mountains, rocks, and flowers ; and you can hear the thunder rolling, and see the moorland in its solitude of purple heather as though your feet were

upon it. He knows the earth and the great sea, as he has tried to show Turner knew them, but Ruskin knows them best. He has been faithful to his trust, remembering that he must have the weaknesses of the man, and above all of the critic. According to his light, and it has been no feeble glimmer, he has written and spoken. And now, forsooth, because he is fully of age, and not altogether the giant he was, he is at bay, and the hounds are upon him.

Good ladies and gentlemen, keep your hands off. He is a master—only masters must touch him. He must be judged by his peers. Not that you are not able to see his faults, but rather that you are not likely to correct them. He deserves more than mercy. He merits the utmost forgiveness. He has given the English people—nay, I think, the whole world, such a gift of literature as has never come to it from any

other source. He may have preached overmuch, but, at any rate, his preaching has been pure and manly, and to the purpose. He may have dogmatised, and no wonder, since he knew so much more than other men. He has been a prince of power, and now, because he is old, and has lost his strength, they bark, these dogs of critics.

If any man has read *Modern Painters* and *The Stones of Venice*, let him read them again, and remembering that their author is human, let him thank God for them.

We cannot afford to leave Mr. Ruskin out of the history of England during the last fifty years. The art of painting and the art of writing owe more to him than can be reckoned on a page. He has stirred the young to enthusiasm, he has informed the mature, and he has drawn pictures and written pages as full of true poetry as last

night's tempest must have been prolific of destruction.

He is not an archangel. I am glad he is not. He is simple John Ruskin; but when I think of him with all his faults and all his goodness, and all the scars he has got fighting our battles, I gratefully accept what he has written, not wishing it should be other than it is.

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